

CAITANYA (1486-1533) Vaisnava saint and mystic and the chief architect of the Gaudiya Vaisnavite movement in Eastern India is regarded as an embodiment of the spirit of Krishna and his consort Radha.

Born in a conservative and decadent society, Caitanya revolted against the established values of the age. The Vaisnavite movement that started with the advent of Caitanya spread all over Bengal and Eastern India and inspired people for about two centuries.

For Caitanya, the legend of Krishna and his divine consort Radha was the symbol of the highest expression of mutual love between God and the human soul. He felt Bhakti (devotion) superseded all other forms of religious practices and conceived it as complete surrender of the Self to the Divine Will.

Although a scholar, Caitanya has not left anything for posterity in writing. However, the poetry, especially the matchless *padas* of Vaisnava poets, from those who witnessed the superb sight of his love ecstasy, have enriched our literature beyond measure. These *padas*, the greater part of which are devoted to Krishna's love for Radha, possess a deep spiritual significance.

A number of biographical works have been written by his followers, the notable among them are the *Karchas* (Notes) by Govinda Das, *Caitanyacharitamrita* by Krishna Das, *Caitanya Mangal* by Jayananda and *Caitanya Bhagavata* by Vrindavana Das.

DR. ASOKE CHATTERJEE SASTRI (b.1929), the author of this monograph, is a critic and scholar of eminence. He is also the recipient of the Griffith Memorial and the Umeshchandra Vidyaratna prizes. Currently he is Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit at the University of Calcutta.

In this monograph, Dr. Sastri has very lucidly summarised the significance of the enormous impact of Caitanya on the religious, social and literary life of Indians.

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